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13 September 2013

Linda Perkins
Headteacher
St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School
Queen Street
Kingswinford
DY6 7AQ

Dear Mrs Perkins

No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School

Following my visit with Mark Sims, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 11 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of leadership and management at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the headteacher and other senior school staff, a group of teachers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors spoke informally to other staff around the school. The results of the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered. Inspectors recognised there may be possible anomalies with this information. Inspectors spoke with the parents of 64 pupils, from all classes in the school, and took account of letters received from parents. Inspectors observed three lessons jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and made short visits to all classes to talk with pupils and look at the quality of their learning. Inspectors scrutinised additional documents including: the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers set targets to improve pupils' progress; the school's information about pupils' progress over time; minutes of governing body meetings; records of visits made to the school by the local authority and the school's information about how it works with parents.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

The quality of leadership and management is good.

Context

The school is smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below that in most schools, as is the number of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. A slightly above-average proportion of pupils join the school other than at the usual time. In the last three years, there has been a significant turnover of staff, with a large number of teachers joining or leaving the school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders at all levels, including governors, share high expectations and are ambitious for the school to provide the best education it can for its pupils. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has built a strong leadership team which is driving forward improvement. Some senior leaders have too many responsibilities, which limits the degree to which they can impact on some aspects of improvement.

Leaders ensure that pupils are safe. There are robust procedures for protecting pupils who may be at risk. The school is a caring community where staff and pupils actively seek to protect one another. Several parents spoke with inspectors and said the school is friendly and welcoming. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe.

The headteacher, ably supported by governors, has taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching. A programme of training and coaching for teachers was established with the support of local authority consultants and a partner school. Senior leaders regularly check whether teachers are following agreed policies and practices by scrutinising pupils' work and looking at teachers' plans. Teachers' performance targets are linked to the progress pupils are expected to make in English and mathematics. Decisions about teachers' salaries are based on how well these targets are met. The headteacher and deputy headteacher observe lessons to check the quality of teaching. They accurately judge the learning that has taken place. As a result of these actions, pupils' achievement is improving in most classes.

Older pupils reported some weaknesses in teaching that remain in Key Stage 2. Some inadequate progress in lessons was observed during the inspection. Where teaching has been of most concern, school records show that leaders have provided support and checked frequently if this is making a difference. Some teachers have not been checked as closely. Judgements of the quality of teaching over time do not fully take into account the progress that all groups of pupils make. As a result, standards and progress in mathematics have not risen as quickly as they might have, and a gap still exists between boys' and girls' attainment in writing. Pupils' scores in the 2013 Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics were much lower than those expected by their teachers.

Governors use data to provide an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and to understand where pupils' achievement needs to improve. They challenge and support the headteacher to take action to improve the quality of teaching. The governing body monitors the impact of spending to ensure that the school budget, including the pupil premium is well spent. They ensure the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities, including for the safeguarding of pupils.

The school has implemented a range of approaches to engage parents and keep them informed about what the school does. The majority of parents have confidence in the school. A minority of parents expressed concerns. Some would like more information about what is happening in school and about how well their children are doing. Others are concerned that some children have not always had good quality physical education lessons. Inspection evidence indicates that there is some justification for these concerns and that the school could do more to keep parents informed.

External support

The school has been supported by local authority advisers and an independent School Improvement Partner to produce an improvement plan that effectively addresses the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The school reports that the training and coaching programme for teachers has built teachers' confidence and skills in teaching mathematics. The local authority evaluates the impact of support given and recognises the need for more intervention and support to improve standards and progress in mathematics further.

Priorities for further improvement

- Where the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good, provide rigorous monitoring and support.
- Speed up the rate of improvement in standards and progress in mathematics and reduce the discrepancy between teachers' predictions and test results at Key Stage 2.

PROTECT-INSPECTION



- Leaders and governors must actively seek and act upon the views of parents and pupils.

The principal focus of this inspection was on the quality of leadership. However, inspectors also considered other aspects of the school's work. Some of this evidence indicates that some pupils could make better progress. In the light of this, a recommendation has been made to the Regional Director for the West Midlands that the next full section 5 inspection be brought forward.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services, the Secretary of State for Education, the Diocese of Worcester the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc E A Green, Chair of the Governing Body